

4 December 1965

FAULTY DATA ON VIET WAR, REPORTER SAYS

Charles Mohr, Viet Nam correspondent for *The New York Times*, last week said that military spokesmen were responsible for feeding the American public "a steady stream of misinformation" about the Viet Nam war effort.

The reporter made his comments in a column appearing in *The Times*.

Mohr described several instances when news media carried data issued at a regular briefing session later to be discredited. One such instance was the case of a Viet Cong body count after a siege of the Special Forces Camp at Pleime last month. The claim was that there were 90 enemy bodies, some hanging on the camp's barbed wire.

"Later, when a reporter reached the besieged camp, still under fire, and said he wanted to photograph the bodies on the barbed wire, the grimy bearded, exhausted defenders broke into bitter laughter," Mohr wrote.

"They said that there had never been bodies on the wire and that they had never made the original count of 90 enemy dead."

During recent fighting in the Iadrang River valley between North Vietnamese regulars and US First Cavalry units, Mohr said a reporter was told by a battalion commander in the field that he had counted about 160 enemy dead in two days. American command's information office in Saigon announced that evening that the total was 869.

The Times reporter said those and other incidents raised serious questions about the briefing officer's knowledgeability and accuracy and about the way the distortions occur.

"There has also been a tendency to

put the best possible face on military reports through variations in vocabulary," Mohr said.

His column followed the same theme as a talk about Viet Nam coverage he made at the OPC in April, 1964, when Mohr said that "Many of these briefings were deliberately misleading."

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MUELLER AT CONFERENCE

OPC President Merrill Mueller was in Washington earlier this week for a three-day UNESCO Conference at the White House.

Mueller represents the Club on the United States National Commission for UNESCO (United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

Business included work on International Cooperation Year activities, such as seeking formal US ratification of conventions on slavery, forced labor, women's political rights and genocide.

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GEOGRAPHIC TRIBUTE

The National Geographic is the latest publication to report it plans a tribute to its Viet Nam correspondent, the late *Dickey Chapelle*.

The magazine plans a staff-written tribute to run tandem with her final story and pictures in the February issue.

MAGAZINE AWARD

The National Magazine Award has been established by the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

The award will be given annually for outstanding editorial achievement. It is being sponsored by the school at the invitation of the American Society of Magazine Editors under a grant from the Magazine Publishers Association. The first winning magazine will be announced in March. Deadline for entries is Jan. 31.